

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EUR-25 NEA-10 SY-10 IO-13 SS-15 NSC-10

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 EB-11 AID-20 DODE-00

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R 221015 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6896

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1461

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS BM

SUBJECT: SECURITY OF UNITED STATES PERSONNEL IN BURMA

REF: A. RANGOON 1407

B. RANGOON 1413

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN DISCLOSING CAPTURE TWO MONTHS AGO OF TWO SOVIET PERSONNEL BY INSURGENT GROUP, GUB HAS PUBLICLY AFFIRMED ( AND ALSO DIRECTLY TO DCM) THAT IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURITY OF FOREIGN OFFICIALS AND TECHNICIANS, BUT HAS ALSO REQUESTED DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS TO ADVISE THEIR NATIONALS TO EXERCISE PRECAUTIONS FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY. THESE DEVELOPMENTS RAISE QUESTION OF THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR SECURITY OF US OFFICIAL PERSONNEL IN BURMA. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT ITS NORMAL PRECAUTIONS TOGETHER WITH ADDITIONAL MEASURES RECENTLY TAKEN SHOULD PROVE ADEQUATE IN ABSENCE OF DEVELOPMENTS THAT CANNOT NOW BE FORESEEN. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUND TO COMMENTS BY COLONEL TIN OO AND PRESS ON SECURITY SITUATION FOR FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AND TECHNICIANS IN BURMA AS REPORTED PARA 5 B REF A AND PARA 1 F REF B.

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2. ON MARCH 15 MFA SENT TO FOREIGN MISSIONS, INCLUDING US, NOTE STATING THAT " IN VIEW OF EVENTS WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD, THE GUB FELT DESIRABLE TO TAKE MORE SECURITY MEASURES FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS, STAFF MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES OF THE DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN RANGOON." NOTE ADDED THAT GUB WOULD MAKE SPECIAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AT RECEPTIONS AND OTHER FUNCTIONS, WHETHER OFFICIAL OR PRIVATE, IF MFA WERE INFORMED IN ADVANCE. NOTE DID NOT REPEAT NOT CONVEY ANY WARNING OR REQUEST MISSIONS TO TAKE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS ON THEIR OWN ACCOUNT.

3. ABOUT SAME TIME, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR REQUESTED ADDITIONAL PERSONAL SECURITY, STIMULATED BY EVENTS ABROAD AND FACT THAT SEVERAL UNIDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS HAD SOUGHT TO SEE HIM AT HIS RESIDENCE RATHER THAN CHANCERY BUT HAD BEEN TURNED AWAY BY KNIFE- WIELDING WATCHMAN. AMBASSADOR EILAN WAS GIVEN ARMED ESCORT IN JEEP WHEREVER HE GOES AND ALSO MILITARY SENTRIES POSTED AT CHANCERY AND RESIDENCE.

4. ON JUNE 14 COINCIDENT WITH ARRIVAL OF US SWIMMING COACH EDWARD BETTENDORF UNDER CU AUSPICES, DIRECTOR GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, SENT CONFIDENTIAL FORM LETTER TO AMBASSADOR WHICH STATED THAT GUB HAS BEEN TAKING NECESSARY MEASURES FOR THE SECURITY OF FOREIGN PERSONNEL STATIONED IN BURMA UNDER " CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM OR ANY OTHER PROGRAM OR UNDER INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS.". LETTER ADDED THAT IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE SECURITY OF SUCH PERSONNEL TO BE ENDANGERED IN SPITE OF MEASURES TAKEN BY THE AUTHORITIES. AMBASSADOR WAS THEREFORE REQUESTED TO ADVISE ALL US NATIONALS STATIONED IN BURMA UNDER CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM OR UNDER INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS TO BE " PARTICULARLY PRUDENT WITH REGARD TO SAFETY AND SECURITY IN THEIR TRAVEL MOVEMENTS AND WHILST AT WORK SITE AND AT RESIDENCE." LETTER ASKED AMBASSADOR TO ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT AND ALSO TO FORWARD INDIVIDUAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM THE PERSONNEL CONCERNED OF RECEIPT OF SAID INSTRUCTION. SAME LETTER WAS ALSO GIVEN TO BETTENDORF AND TO LAWRENCE HIGLEY, AID CONTRACT ENGINEER  
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AT TEAK MILL.

5. SIMILAR LETTER IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE BEEN SENT BY MINISTRIES ( INCLUDING PLANNING AND FINANCE) TO OTHER MISSIONS HAVING PERSONNEL IN SUCH CATEGORIES, AND ALSO TO UN AGENCIES. AS FAR AS WE KNOW, NO LETTERS OF THIS TYPE HAVE COME FROM FOREIGN MINISTRY BUT RATHER FROM

MINISTRIES UNDER WHOSE AUSPICES SUCH PERSONNEL ARE IN BURMA.

6. DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS HAS RAISED MATTER WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY, STATING VARIOUS CHIEFS OF MISSION HAVE TAKEN IT UP WITH HIM, BUT HE HAS NOT RECEIVED DEFINITIVE ANSWERS TO HIS QUERIES AND PLANS TO PURSUE SUBJECT.

7. DCM RAISED SUBJECT WITH UN WIN, DIRECTOR, PROTOCOL AND CONSULAR DEPARTMENT, MFA, ON JUNE 22 DURING CALL ON ANOTHER MATTER. UN WIN AFFIRMED GUB'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY OF FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL AND NOTED THAT ANY QUESTIONS ON SUBJECT SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO ATTENTION MFA ITSELF. HE ADDED THAT MIS SPECIAL BRANCH PERSONNEL WERE WATCHING OVER FOREIGN DIPLOMATS AT ALL TIMES.

8. THESE DEVELOPMENTS RAISE QUESTION OF THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR SECURITY OF US OFFICIAL PERSONNEL IN BURMA. CURRENT SITUATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. IN RANGOON ITSELF SECURITY SITUATION APPEARS FAIRLY GOOD. IT IS TRUE THAT INSURGENTS IN ONES AND TWOS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED WITHIN CITY LIMITS, BUT THEIR EFFORTS WERE HARDLY LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN AIMED AT US PERSONNEL. MIS IS SO EFFICIENT THAT DISSIDENTS WITHIN RANGOON WOULD HAVE ALL THEIR WORK CUT OUT TO ESCAPE ITS CLUTCHES WITHOUT PLANNING OR INJURY TO SEIZURE OF FOREIGNERS. ON OTHER HAND, TERRORISTS CAN SOMETIMES TAKE ILLOGICAL MEASURES.

B. THERE IS OF COURSE NO WAY OF GUARANTEEING IMMUNITY OF US PERSONNEL FROM INJURY IF BY COINCIDENCE THEY FOUND

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THEMSELVES IN LOCATIONS WHERE INDISCRIMINATE TERRORIST INCIDENTS OCCURRED (E. G. GRENADE THROWING AT MAIL RAILROAD STATION APRIL 29 WHICH RESULTED IN DEATH OF AT LEAST EIGHT BURMESE).

C. RISKS ARE GREATER FOR US PERSONNEL TRAVELING OUTSIDE RANGOON. MFA HAS LONG REQUIRED THAT 14 DAYS NOTICE OF SUCH PROPOSED TRIPS BE GIVEN IN WRITING, WITH EMBASSY

NOTIFIED IF PERMISSION DECLINED. LATTER SOMETIMES OCCURS, WITH UNCERTAIN SECURITY IN AREAS TO BE VISITED USUALLY A FACTOR IN NEGATIVE DECISION, ALTHOUGH NOT STATED. INSURGENCY HAS ALWAYS EXISTED AT DIFFERING LEVELS IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN 25 YEARS SINCE GUB BECAME INDEPENDENT,

AND FOREIGN PERSONNEL HAVE SOMETIMES BEEN CAUGHT IN MIDDLE  
IN INSURGENT SKIRMISHES WITH BURMA ARMY OR POLICE FORCES.  
FACT THAT GUB IS SENSITIVE TO CHANGING SECURITY SITUATION  
IN VARIOUS AREAS PROVIDES SOME ASSURANCE OF SAFETY.  
RECENTLY, FOR EXAMPLE, IT ORDERED EVACUATION TO RANGOON  
OF CANADIAN LED UN TIN AND TUNGSTEN EXPLORATION MISSION  
WHICH HAD BEEN WORKING SOUTH OF MOULMEIN. THERE IS NO  
INDICATION WHEN GROUP WILL BE PERMITTED TO RESUME ITS  
ACTIVITIES. IN FEBRUARY ITS MEMBERS SUFFERED INJURIES  
WHEN GUB ESCORT WAS FIRED ON BY  
E E E E E E E

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